132 133 [3] La Guajira is a semidesert region, a condition to which four essential factors contribute, in our opinion: 1) the presence of sandy soil which absorbs the water of the small arroyos which flow from the mountain ridges; 2) the constant trade winds which blow strongly from the northeast over the peninsula and tend to temper the climate somewhat; 3) the lack of any real relief with elevations of importance which could act as a barrier to the clouds laden with moisture which are blown by the force of the winds toward the interior regions of the continent; 4) the high atmospheric temperatures which reach 42°C. in the shade at noon and are only slightly tempered by the trade winds and sea breezes.

These factors largely determine the hydrography of the peninsula in which, it may be said, there are only two permanent rivers, the Río Hacha, which forms the boundary with the neighboring department of Magdalena, and the arroyo Paraguichón, which marks the boundary with the republic of Venezuela. Beyond this the region is subject to the seasonal cycle of rainfall, which divides itself into a completely dry summer season with only rare light showers in what might be called spring (approximately in April) and a winter season with violent rains. This last season covers approximately the months of September to December/January, while the first, with the exception of the occasional rains in spring already mentioned, covers the remaining months of the year.

133 134 [164] All these facts convert the peninsula during the summer season into a true desert without vegetation, with the earth covered with loose sand, particles of which are blown into the air by the prevailing winds, causing considerable trouble to travelers and even giving rise to eye infections among the natives. But in winter, when the abundant and copious rains have fallen, the soil, which in parts is below sea level, becomes so flooded that at times all land communications are totally obstructed even on improved [herradura] roads; the dry beds of currents of water are converted into true arroyos, water holes into ponds, and everything is an immense sea of fresh water.

133 312 One must also take into account the presence of some few lakes, such as Guaraguaraso, near Marañamana; Soledad, 20 kilometers south of Pájaro; Carandá, approximately 30 kilometers west of Ríohacha; Sararapa, near Puerto López; and Cuiza,